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ABSTRACT

This paper describes one effort to establish a collaborative around the issues of at-risk youth. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's New Futures Initiative was an attempt to build formal structures of collaboration among public and private organizations to address at-risk youth. Data were gathered over 5 years from the six cities in which the program was implemented--Dayton, Ohio; Lawrence, Massachusetts; Little Rock, Arkansas; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Savannah, Georgia; and Bridgeport, Connecticut. Most observers agree that reality fell considerably short of the foundation's vision. This paper explains the disparity between theory and practice in community collaboration by analyzing three broad issues that plagued New Futures collaboratives: (1) slippage between policy intent and street-level action; (2) disjuncture between policy and actual social conditions; and (3) the need to build "social capital" to improve at-risk youths' life chances. In conclusion, organizations dominated by high-level decision makers and experts tend to become paternalistic, which undermines the fundamental goals of the collaborative. The recommendation is made to reconceptualize efforts at collaboration by turning to the community itself for additional expertise. (LMI)

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THE CALL FOR COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Policy analysts have recently argued that schools and other human service agencies charged with nurturing and supporting children must find ways to collaborate to use their resources more efficiently and effectively in the face of today's challenging social and family conditions. The language of collaboration is increasingly used to describe ways of providing a more holistic, comprehensive response to children whose problems tend to be complex and multi-faceted (Bruner, 1991; Goode, 1990; Lassen & Janey, 1991; Melaville, 1991; Melaville, & Blank, 1991; Melaville, Blank, & Asayesh, 1993; Rist, 1992).

Melaville and Blank (1993) advocate a "profamily system of education and human services" built around a new organization, the human service collaborative. The main force of their argument is that collaboration should produce "systems change," i.e., a "revision of the ways that people and institutions think, behave and use their resources to affect fundamentally" the services provided to children and families (Melaville and Blank, 1993). Bringing about systems change implies more than cooperation among agencies such as sharing information about clients. While cooperation requires that partners work together to meet individual organizational goals, it does not require them to restructure processes and assume new goals. Collaboration, on the other hand implies far reaching changes in policy, practice and accountability for results.

To achieve the kind of collaboration envisioned requires a locally controlled governance system representing human service organizations and a broad spectrum of community interests.

> Most importantly, the children and families who participate in our education and human service systems are essential to its re-invention. They are indispensable partners with educators, human service professional, business leaders, civic and religious leaders, leaders of community-based organizations, and other citizens in creating a profamily system....(Melaville & Blank, 1993)

Three things should be noted about this vision. One is that those who were previously defined as "clients" or recipients of services are now seen as partners in collaboration. Second, the partnership includes the private sector. Business as well as the usual array of social service agencies is to be at the table where decisions are made. Third, some new form of governance is required to make policy and coordinate agencies in their practices and use of resources. This vision of community collaboration intends to hold various agencies and organizations accountable for meeting the goals and expectations of the collaborative body.

While noble in purpose, mixing public agencies, private sector organizations (both for profit and not-for-profit), as well as involving the families being served, implies a level of organizational complexity that taxes the intellectual and political skills of communities. To illustrate the difficulties, but also the potential of this concept, we offer a study of one effort to establish a collaborative around issues of at-risk youth.

NEW FUTURES: AN EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

This paper was stimulated primarily by our experiences with the Annie E. Casey Foundation's New Futures Initiative, an attempt to build formal structures of collaboration

among public and private organizations to address at-risk youth. Beginning in 1988, the Casey Foundation selected five cities--Dayton, OH; Lawrence, MA; Little Rock, AR; Pittsburgh, PA; Savannah, GA--to implement versions of community collaboration. Later, a sixth city, Bridgeport, CT, was added to New Futures.

In this paper, we draw selectively from data gathered over five years of the initiative in these six cities to illustrate some of the problems encountered in implementing a broad system of community collaboration. We outline the goals the New Futures project set for itself as well as the strategies and mechanisms used to build collaborative structures. It is not our purpose to systematically assess the success or failure of collaboration in each New Futures city. Our intent is to select examples that illuminate some of the issues inherent in building a community-wide collaborative organization that address the multiple problems of today's youth.

The Casey Foundation described the intent of New Futures in this way:

> "New Futures" is an attempt,...to reshape the basic policies and practices of those institutions which help determine the preparation and prospects of young people...The New Futures program seeks to make long-term changes in the operation, principles and policies by which education, employment and other youth services are administered financed and delivered...(in) government and the private sector...(Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1988)

The Casey Foundation identified three specific outcomes that each city was to achieve through a community collaborative: reduced dropout rates; increased youth employment after high school; and reduced rates of adolescent pregnancy and parenthood.

The initiative was designed around a central strategy--each city would establish an "oversight collaborative" body charged with governance responsibilities. The central governance tasks were to identify youth problems, develop strategies and set time-lines for

addressing these problems, coordinate joint agency activities and restructure educational and social services. The oversight collaborative was conceived as a quasi-political body with the power to make policy in the interests of at-risk youth across a whole community.

To aid in delivering services and in restructuring youth policy and practice, the Casey Foundation asked each city to set up a system of case management with a staff under the direction of the collaborative. In theory, case managers were to: (1) broker services from disparate agencies for youth and their families; (2) serve as advocates of at-risk youth by being friend, mentor and "significant" adult in their lives; and (3) serve as "the eyes and ears of the collaborative" in order to provide information and feedback about policy and practice.

This last function meant that case managers were to gain intimate knowledge of each young person's family living conditions, experiences in school and interactions with social service agencies. Given this rich knowledge, case managers would then be in a position to identify and suggest remedies for the inadequacies, inefficiencies and failures within the systems intended to serve youth. Case managers were to report institutional problems to the collaborative which, in its oversight role, was in a position to make agencies accountable for their policies and practices.

In fact, most observers agree that reality fell considerably short of the vision offered by the Casey Foundation. In the remainder of this paper, we describe some of the disparity between theory and practice in community collaboration, and we try to explain much of this disparity by analyzing three broad issues that plagued New Futures collaboratives.

THREE ISSUES FOR COLLABORATIVES

Based on the New Futures experience, we believe that any community collaborative will confront the following problems: (1) "slippage" occurs between policy intent and street-level action; (2) "disjuncture" develops between policy based on assumed knowledge of social conditions and actual social conditions in a community; (3) building "social capital" is necessary if the goals of improving the life chances of at-risk youth are to be realized.

1. Slippage between policy and action.

Some degree of slippage will probably always exist between the intent of any formal organization's policy and the reality of eventual implementation and action by front-line professionals. However, New Futures collaboratives suffered to a serious degree from this problem. One theory that helps explain slippage is borrowed from economics.

The "principal-agent model" describes relationships between governing institutions and the agencies they seek to control. This model accounts for difficulties in relations between agencies and the collaborative. Terry Moe (1987) suggests the following relationship between information, interest and control in the principal-agent model:

> Broadly speaking, the thrust of the principal-agent literature is that control is quite problematic indeed. The principal tries to control the behavior of his agent, but the agent is driven by his own interests, makes decisions on the basis of information only imperfectly available to the principal and engages in behavior that the principal can only imperfectly observe. Because of these fundamental problems, the principal ordinarily must expect some and often a great deal of slippage between the performance he desires from the agent and the performance he actually receives.

The oversight collaborative is such a principal attempting to reshape the agendas of member organizations. However, a collaborative has to rely on a weak, loosely-coupled organizational form. It is essentially a confederation of organizations that has few sanctions

to hold members accountable. In a confederation, individual members are not ultimately accountable to the collaborative.

The collaborative is just one of several principals and it competes with other principals with their own guidelines and requirements that control an agency. For example, the collaborative competes with federal and state welfare departments for control over agency actions. Government regulations, funding criteria and boards of directors who sponsor agency work all compete with the authority of the collaborative. If an agency is part of a state or the federal government, confidentiality guidelines may prohibit or at least restrict the sharing of some kinds of information that collaborative arrangements require. For example, New Futures case managers who were employed by collaboratives to work with at-risk youth testified that confidentiality was a particular problem in dealing with the juvenile court system.

But slippage between the collaborative and its members is only one place where it occurs. Michael Lipsky (1980) has developed a somewhat different theory of slippage to describe what occurs within public bureaucracies. He has argued that street-level bureaucrats perceive their interests as separate from management, although sometimes coincident, largely because they are the contact point for the public. Lipsky contends that to speak of an agency having a single "interest" obscures critical differences among various individuals and groups within agencies.

Lipsky's model has the advantage of explicitly linking these internally competing interests to the concrete experiences of workers. For example, in dealing directly with the human dimension of policy, front line workers constantly confront the apparent unfairness of

treating people in different situations alike. These experiences often teach street-level bureaucrats to use their discretion in ways that compromise the uniformity of implementation policy-makers intended. Front-line workers have acquired a certain kind of expertise through their experiences serving clients which is absent among those not directly involved. At the "street level," they often feel justified in exercising their discretion because they are dealing with a "different world" than are those who make policy. Deliberately creating slippage between policy and action at the front line is justified by the special expertise claimed by those working day to day in a complex world.

Slippage and the case of case management: In theory, New Futures case managers were a vital source of information for the collaborative members. Case managers were to function as the "eyes and ears" of the collaborative by informing those at the top of the organization about front-line conditions. In practice, however, case managers were rarely given a forum to communicate their street-level understanding of the problems of at-risk youth and their families. The collaboratives generally lacked a mechanism for giving case managers a voice in policy, and even where feedback mechanisms were in place, policy makers were not inclined to value the knowledge of case managers as useful in making policy.

Interviews with case managers indicated that for the most part critical information they had as front-line workers was ignored. Their knowledge simply wasn't recognized as critical to decision-making. One area where this became evident was with "inter-agency agreements" which were intended to be a fundamental building block of collaboration. Inter-

agency agreements were formulated by Directors of agencies to produce cooperation at the front-line.

However, in Savannah for example, case managers pointed out that, as the "new kids on the block," they faced a number of problems in dealing with their counter parts in well established bureaucracies. Issues of "turf" protection were strong. For example, one agreement stipulated that New Futures youth would get first priority in mental health services, but in fact it was discovered that they were given the lowest priority. The argument that mental health staff made was that at least New Futures kids had a case manager looking out for them, but other youth had no one advocating for them and therefore should get priority. Also, in the schools, despite very explicit agreements about dealing with at-risk youth, some school staff felt threatened by the case managers and undercut intervention efforts.

Attempts by case managers to get a child help from other social services organizations were often thwarted in encounters with bureaucrats who either did not understand New Futures case management system or viewed it as a threat. Several case managers noted that they had to go over the heads of front line workers to supervisors in other agencies to get things done. Thus, simple tasks like information access became complicated and time consuming. Further, while New Futures case managers often felt their positions were misunderstood or resented, case workers in other agencies felt the mis-communication worked both ways. In Savannah, several case workers in the Division of Family and Children's services were concerned that their counterparts at New Futures did not understand

the parameters and limitations of their jobs. Agency front line staff spoke of "unrealistic expectations" for what they could do.

While top-level managers were making agreements at the collaborative level, they were not hearing from case managers about how those agreements were working. Clearly, buy-in at the top often did not translate into buy-in at the front line. To the extent that "turf" battles were at the root of this, they were battles of substantial consequence for children and case workers. As one supervisor noted of inter-agency relations generally, it is a kind of "inverse turf protection" which occurs in service delivery - "everybody is trying to do their own gate-keeping." Limited budgets, large case loads, and work days that were already too long made such gate-keeping a necessity. It is not clear that collaboration in the form of high-level agreements will address these problems even though "gate-keeping" of this kind remains the cause of many of those proverbial "cracks" through which kids fall.

The New Futures experience suggests that an agreement to collaborate in the general interest of helping at-risk youth does not nullify the particular interests of each individual agency, or within agencies the interests of particular workers.

2. Disjuncture between policy and social conditions.

The second major issue concerns disjuncture between collaborative policy intended to serve at-risk youth and the actual social conditions affecting such youth. Whereas slippage describes the gap between good policy and weak implementation and execution, disjuncture describes poorly designed policy. Disjuncture results from inadequate and inaccurate knowledge about social conditions and the needs and desires of disadvantaged groups. Disjuncture also results when collaboratives fail to obtain the consensus necessary to establish

consistent policy. Often the lack of consensus is due to a lack of information. It can also result from the lack of practical theories necessary to make good policy. In any event, the result is that policy and practice are ineffective.

Lack of knowledge:

In theory, case managers were to provide a built-in system of feed-back to the collaborative. Such feed-back was seen as vital information about the congruence between policy and action. But case managers were not given a seat at the collaborative table where they could provide such feedback. The upshot was that collaborative boards tended to be very top-heavy with agency heads and other high level bureaucrats. By necessity these people tended to be isolated, operating at some distance from either those being served or those actually delivering services. The lack of voice for case managers that could inform the collaborative members proved to be highly significant in the formulation of policy. The result was a persistent information gap about the impact of policy, something case management was intended to remedy. Consequently, policies by the collaborative were sometimes off the mark because they were based on an incomplete understanding of day to day conditions and events.

Case managers repeatedly expressed frustrations with the fact that they played a limited or non-existent role in advising collaborative policy. In Bridgeport, for example, case managers spoke eloquently of the impediments to communication with collaborative members, especially about the failure to represent the parents they served. Case managers described a persistent gulf between themselves and the collaborative by depicting "two worlds that spoke different languages and had different priorities." They recalled with some

bitterness that the front-line staff had not been included in the original planning process. In fact, when Bridgeport originally received only a partial, rather than full grant from the Casey Foundation, some case managers felt vindicated, hoping the collaborative members would learn the price of their exclusiveness. Even when opportunities were created for case managers to participate in decisions, they often felt their input was not taken seriously. A case manager commented that planners treated him, "as though I didn't know what I was talking about."

Despite the theory behind New Futures that portrayed case managers as the "eyes and ears of the collaborative," generally board members did not find this idea compelling. The chair of one collaborative testified, "I never thought about including case management in my decision-making process..." The concept of case managers providing a "bottom-up" perspective was either not understood or not bought by people described as "top-level decision makers." Rather case managers were largely viewed as the foot soldiers rather than the "eyes and ears," of the collaborative. Expertise that could have served policy making went largely unrecognized.

Lack of consensus: Disjuncture was reflected in a lack of consensus on the causes of some problems collaboratives wanted to address. Consensus was required over not only the need for action on behalf of at-risk youth, but also rough agreement on the nature and sources of youth problems. To make sound policy, consensus was needed over the kinds of interventions that could produce positive outcomes. People must not only agree that something should be done but what should be done.

Each New Futures city moved forward on the assumption that such consensus could be built if it did not exist already. In most of the cities, a campaign publicizing the plight of at-risk youth was undertaken using statistical data about undesirable outcomes. It was assumed that with such shared knowledge would come a shared will and commitment to act. The danger here was the neglect of political conflict lying just under the surface of the apparent shared will to collaborate.

Typically, in each city statistics showing high rates of dropping out and teen pregnancy produced strong sentiments for action, but neither the cause nor the remedy for these problems was self-evident. For example, an array of programs was proposed to reduce the number of dropouts. These had to be negotiated in a process which was inevitably conflict ridden and political. In particular, schools saw themselves being assaulted by critics who were either ignorant or mean-spirited. Racial, class and ideological divisions all tended to converge to complicate questions about what or who was responsible for the problem. Subsequent political in-fighting brought out multiple perspectives based on people's assumptions about the causes of dropping out and the place of institutional, family and individual responsibilities.

Some people assumed that a high dropout rate was evidence of faulty policies and practices by educators. But school personnel often pointed to the families as the source of student problems. Families and social workers often pointed to schools as punitive. Some in the community claimed young people lacked economic opportunity. Business leaders blamed the lack of opportunity on an undereducated work force. Others assumed the problem was evidence of ineffective social services that failed to provide the kind of support needed to

stabilize families. Still others assumed that high dropout rates reflected fundamental problems associated with a "culture of poverty" in which families don't value education, at least not enough to insure that their children succeed in school. Social service professionals tended to blame the general rise in poverty on cut-backs in federal funding during the 1980's.

The private sector pointed out what it saw as the roots of the problem. A business leader in one city described the crisis as one of individual will, noting that there were jobs out there "flipping burgers," but that kids in his training program were not willing to take them. A community minister suggested the need for programs to focus on peoples' attitudes and values, claiming that as a society "we have a sin problem." He also argued that he, as a black preacher, had "a job to educate (his parishioners) about economics...We can't leave it up to the (white) Baptists" to do the job for us.

All of this finger-pointing is hardly surprising. It reflects the general difficulty posed by competing theories and explanations for youth problems. It illustrates a simple point that demands detailing exactly because policy making is political. Policy is still treated in much of the collaborative literature as though it were free of politics. The difficulty of building consensus is almost always underestimated.

Consensus existed neither among professionals nor among factions of the general public about the causes and remedies of what all agreed were serious youth problems. In the absence of agreement, a profusion of proposals competed for recognition and funding in a political arena. The result was to attenuate efforts by the collaborative to devise strong policy initiatives.

The "right people": Disjuncture also occurred in the cities as a result of not getting the right people to the table to make policy. The official New Futures perspective was that the broadest possible range of people needed to be involved. The intent was to encourage a collective community responsibility for at-risk youth. In theory New Futures called for participation that was "inclusive" as well as "high level." Inclusiveness meant bringing to the table a diversity of community members whose interests were affected by collaboration. Participation of youth and parents as well as grass roots organizations was seen as essential because, according to the Casey Foundation, "Very simply, people and agencies who are not involved in helping to define a problem are unlikely to be involved effectively in solving it" (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1988).

What happened in practice may surprise few. No city developed a permanent mechanism for representing at-risk youth, their families or finding articulate advocates for them. Providing opportunities for those who are the focus of collaborative policies to have their voices heard and participate in the policy making generally did not occur. Despite the Foundation's call for inclusiveness, it is accurate to say that the "senior decision-makers" were the locus of substantive decision-making during the five years of New Futures. While some "community" members made their way onto the collaboratives, they were neither numerous nor influential.

Giving most of the power to key agency professionals was consistent with part of the Foundation's advice; it was crucial that people at the highest levels of organizations be at the table when it came to formulating policy and practice. They had the expertise to make meaningful institutional reform. High level professionals and bureaucrats were not only

knowledgeable, but they had resources and could give the collaborative prestige and political authority. The assumption was that such people had the leverage both to alter individual organizational policies and to persuade others on the collaborative to do the same.

Influence and legitimacy: While collaboratives ought to look for the people who can deliver resources, such people generally lack one critical resource--influence with those who receive services. Influence is typically associated with formal positions of power (i.e. CEO, City Manager, Director of Programs). But for New Futures, given its agenda, influence needed to be reconceptualized to also include the target population. The "right people" needed to include representation by those with legitimacy and authority in the "community at-risk." Such representation and voice is necessary because it is doubtful that agency directors and business leaders have much influence in neighborhoods characterized by poverty and social problems. Without influence and legitimacy, collaborative policies were not always warmly received.

Probably not atypical was the perception by one person who, implying criticism, characterized collaborative membership in her city as white and middle class. While this was not an accurate characterization of the board membership in terms of race, it was clearly accurate in terms of class. In terms of influence, however, the facts behind this perception mattered much less than the perception itself. Similarly, one resident of a low income, black neighborhood in the same city, reflecting on the days of segregation, spoke of the need to remember that while "laws have changed, hearts maybe haven't." This comment reflected the level of trust on one part of disadvantaged groups was not high in any of the New

Futures cities. It was hard for poor people to accept the notion that their interests were articulated well in formal organizations representing mainstream agencies.

Several community members in Savannah commented on the number of projects that had been started up by "outsiders" that never went anywhere. One staffer working with this group also commented on the history of local projects: "They keep getting people to the middle of the bridge,...then there is no continuation." Would New Futures be one more project that was taken up and then abandoned? Serious skepticism on the part of neighborhood residents and black community leaders continues in Savannah, as it probably does in most cities. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the first question organizers were asked at neighborhood council meetings was, "where are you from?" and "how long are you staying?"

Further, the question of influence is intimately related to the question of legitimacy. It is often taken as commonplace that certain positions and educational credentials bestow a legitimacy on policy-makers. Yet, as one case manager noted, "We are dealing with four generations without any confidence in the system." In light of this, professional credentials may not equal legitimacy; they may actually communicate a sense of illegitimacy to some audiences. For example, among many community residents, there were suspicions of those with the kind of influence that comes with agency directorships and other positions conventionally considered power-brokers. Reflecting this suspicion, one community organizer commented that she learned early not to suggest sentiments like, "We're the government and we're here to help." At best this was laughable.

A sensitivity to a history of disillusionment with and distrust of many public institutions is critical to establishing influence. One woman involved in running an after-school program through the churches noted that part of their success had been due to their distance from the public schools, because "parents feel a wall at schools." She saw the church as a far less alienating institution in her community, and its legitimacy with local residents gave it the potential to influence and service that community. This woman went on to suggest some of the problems that even she would face trying to represent those struggling in the neighborhood. "Those of us at the table negotiating are not unemployed or living in public housing. There is a need for representation by those who live it." In a similar vein, a collaborative staff member recognized that the experiences of neighborhood residents were a valuable form of knowledge: "We need to recognize the expertise that comes with the experience of living here." To some extent, legitimacy can be promoted by including recipients of social services in the collaborative's decision making process.

However, much like the problem of giving voice to case managers, no mechanism gave voice to those who were the target of services. Not hearing the voices of community members meant that in some situations collaborative policy was constructed around mis-information about the needs of recipients. More fundamental was the absence of an appreciation by policy makers that such participation could be valuable. What is required is more than a process of professional experts "selling" the benefits of programs and community members "buying in." Participation must include dialogue that respects recipients experiences and views as legitimate knowledge relevant to defining needs and appropriate services.

Teen pregnancy as a case of disjuncture: From the beginning, the New Futures literature recognized the complexity of the teenage pregnancy issue. The issue was seen as related to improving school effectiveness, expanding career opportunities, and developing self-esteem. In light of this, the initiative advocated a several-pronged approach to pregnancy prevention among teens:

> The New Futures initiative is not predicated on any single model or method of trying to reduce pregnancy among sexually active teens. It does assume, however, that each community will develop a multi-faceted strategy that includes full review of the facts about the need for information and access to contraceptives by these youth (Strategic Planning Guide, 1988).

In practice, for a variety of reasons, teen pregnancy was an extremely difficult issue for collaboratives to confront. In some communities it provoked a highly contentious scene. And yet, most adults regardless of their varied religious or political beliefs, saw teen pregnancy as a problem--a bad thing. But, it is not clear that teenagers shared this belief to the same extent.

Some research suggests that most teenage pregnancy is unplanned, though this is primarily the result of unplanned sexual activity rather than a lack of knowledge about birth control and how to obtain it (Smith, Weinman, & Mumford 1982; Zelnik & Kantner, 1979). Other research disputes the claim that most teen pregnancies are accidental (Stark, 1986; Scott, 1983). It would undoubtedly obscure the facts to insist that there is a single explanation for teen pregnancy. A consensus on causes simply doesn't exist.

However, pregnancy prevention programs advocated in most cities appeared to assume that such causes were well understood and that teens shared the same perspective.

Programs were based on the assumption that, with knowledge of pregnancy prevention, and access to contraception, teen pregnancy would sharply decline.

Programs were based on what seemed self-evident to adults. Pregnancy reduces one's chances of completing high school on time and reduces one's chances of employability. Pregnancy is clearly either a "bad" or "irrational" choice (for girls who have information and access to birth control); or, it is unintended (for girls who do not have information and access to birth control). A typical policy response to either of these alternatives is to provide access to more information and education about responsible sexual activity.

But could it be the case that some significant number of girls make a "rational" decision to become pregnant? One school nurse, funded by New Futures, commented that after ninth grade, most of the pregnancies at her school were intended. When she was asked if girls had access to information, she replied, "Most pregnancies here haven't been because they don't know." She reported that often girls were encouraged either by their mothers or boyfriends to become pregnant. Some adult mothers wanted grandchildren; some males wanted the status associated with fatherhood; some mothers wanted the money associated with AFDC benefits. Sometimes an important reason was that the girls themselves wanted out of the house and AFDC provided money for a frugal but independent existence. A social worker at one New Futures clinic commented that "many" teens came to the clinic to find out "how to get pregnant, when they are most fertile, when it is the best time to get pregnant." She added, "To many of the girls, pregnancy is not a mistake." She emphasized the importance of seeing pregnancy as a "symptom" of complex needs that could only be addressed with the more holistic approach to youth development originally advocated by the

Casey Foundation. For example, an often cited reason for wanting a child was that many girls felt the need for someone to love and love them in return. According to a school nurse, many of the girls become so attached to their babies that they slept next to them refusing to use cribs.

Given this kind of testimony, and assuming that it represents in some important way the facts about teen pregnancy, what are the implications for policy? Obviously it suggests the possibility that current policy is based on erroneous assumptions. It appears that for some teens having babies is not necessarily viewed as a problem. Also challenged is a faith that knowledge necessarily leads to a particular decision and action. The belief that knowledge of birth control and the assumed limitations that child raising will place on a teenager do not necessarily produce an avoidance of pregnancy. It appears that information is mediated by economic and cultural conditions that produce decisions that are <u>different</u> <u>and rational</u>.

For example, consider the case of a young woman who has had difficulty in school and lives in a city where employment prospects are dim even for those who graduate from high school. The options for continued education or fulfilling employment are limited and she sees evidence of that daily in her community. She may have a supportive family and friends behind her, yet still have a difficult time imagining options after high school. Several of her friends have babies and her boyfriend would like a child. Her mother may be working two or three jobs to provide for the family, yet there is a close extended family involving the grandmother. Given this situation, the girl may see pregnancy and having a child as a positive, desirable, experience, and not a bad "choice."

Even social service professionals, presumably dedicated to teen pregnancy prevention, may give girls mixed signals. According to a social worker in a Little Rock school clinic,

> I see a lot of adults reaching out to black girls when they get pregnant, it's a real sense of joining in. We notice it here. The staff reach out, "Oh, you're pregnant!" (W)e bring them here...We're all so happy. They bring their babies in and we all go "ooohhhh," and I'm not sure we're sending the right messages. Dr. Elder (at the time, head of Arkansas human services) came, and the photographers came, and they always want a picture with the pregnant girl, never the girl who has managed not to get pregnant. I think we, as caregivers, give out a real mixed message about getting pregnant. If you get pregnant, we'll do everything we can to take care of you...we'll pat your back, we'll hold your hand, we'll be there for you, we'll meet with you every week. It's like, if you don't get pregnant, you'd better just take care of yourself.

One wonders if white teens receive the same mixed signals or whether service workers imply different cultural standards with their behavior. Clearly such mixed messages, especially from those viewed as authorities, complicate the issue of teenage pregnancy still further.

Mixed messages may come from within the community as well. While some mothers and boyfriends encourage teen pregnancy, parents on the Savannah Neighborhood Council, all black women ranging from their late 20's to their 50's, suggested that pregnant teens should be removed from public schools because they set a bad example for other young women. These women, all mothers themselves, claimed that having pregnant teens in school was like condoning their pregnancy, like saying, "it's OK," and they clearly felt it was not OK.

It seems evident that simply providing information and access to birth control may not, in and of themselves, substantially reduce teen pregnancy. Also essential is the view by teens that pregnancy is a limitation of one's future. Yet some portion of teens, do not see

pregnancy as a bad decision. In order to address these teens, policy makers might begin with a set of questions that explore teen pregnancy as rational and functional, rather than assuming it is necessarily irrational and dysfunctional.

From a policy perspective for collaboratives, the notion of teenagers "choosing" implies intention toward one of several meaningful alternatives. Intention is itself problematic as teens often describe their sexual encounters as spontaneous, and therefore, by definition unintended (Stark, 1986). But since it has been suggested that pregnancy is for some important portion of the girls involved in New Futures' projects, a desired and intended outcome, the question remains whether it is legitimate to call it a choice in light of meaningful alternatives.

It may be that in a city like Savannah, where nearly one-third of the population lives below the federal poverty line, it is quite rational to be skeptical about one's earning potential (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1989). So in an economic sense, it may be a rational decision to become pregnant. But the larger point is that this says far less about the strength of AFDC as an incentive than it does about the poverty in an environment that makes it appear as such.

Choices are limited by access to resources as well as perceptions of opportunity. These considerations provide collaboratives with the chance to construct "meaningful alternatives" for young people. Constructing such alternatives would doubtless require the coordinated efforts of multiple institutions. Yet, in the case of Savannah, the collaborative engaged the issue of sex education and its relationship to teen pregnancy on only the narrowest grounds. On one important occasion debate focused exclusively on the ethics of a

particular school curriculum. One board member took issue with a new state-wide curriculum in sex education. She referred to studies that seemed to show that sex education did not reduce the incidence of teen pregnancy. This was an opportunity to discuss the issue in some depth. It was an opening to discover the complexity of reasons for teen pregnancy and to discuss how institutional collaboration might address the "problem." Instead the discussion focused exclusively on issues about what students should and shouldn't learn about sex in public school curriculum. In fact, the purported causes of teen pregnancy were never discussed.

Again, while case managers, school social workers, counselors and teens themselves all had valuable experience with the teen pregnancy issue, none were present to contribute to the discussion. Teen pregnancy was an issue most people assumed they understood. But such easy assumptions got in the way of good policy. The top-down organization of the collaborative was an important factor that kept the complexity of the issue from emerging.

A response to slippage and disjuncture: Plans are now underway by Savannah's New Futures for a neighborhood-based Family Resource Center (FRC) which will be governed to some extent by community representatives. The impetus for locating the FRC in a specific neighborhood was a study done by the city manager's office. Using indicators such as crime, violence, child abuse, dilapidated housing and fires, it was found that this particular neighborhood had a concentration of problems. The neighborhood was described as a "community at-risk." The FRC initiative represents an attempt, based on inter-agency agreements, to offer access to multiple services in one building. Plans are to utilize a single intake process and a single evaluation of a family's needs to access multiple services. This is

viewed as a client sensitive move in its attempt to reduce the amount of paper work any client/family undertakes. Perhaps more importantly the neighborhood center has the potential to take seriously the role of clients themselves in defining their needs and in creating a congruent agenda.

The FRC is governed in part by a neighborhood advisory council. Many of the women involved (and currently all the members of the council are women) are mothers who live in the neighborhood, have children in the public schools and receive welfare. These women appear to have a high degree of leadership status in the community. Most have been involved in other neighborhood projects such as crime watch or a shelter for battered women. Very often they become involved in local projects through their churches. Local church leaders have been central to recruiting members for the neighborhood advisory council.

The potential of the FRC is that several neighborhood organizations expressed interest in shaping its agenda to be much more than a provider of social services. One representative of an Afro-American cultural organization thought that the center might provide an opportunity to showcase the talents of people in the community. For example, it was argued that the center should organize an art program in order to connect the local community to the larger art community. It should provide a place for African and black American cultural programs such as African dance programs. A minister wanted to develop a youth soccer league through the center.

It remains to be seen how successful local residents will be in influencing the FRC agenda. However, disjuncture between collaborative staff plans and sentiment in the

neighborhood already exists. The staff has focused on the center providing information about public assistance and services such as perinatal care and drug and alcohol counseling. A number of neighborhood residents seemed concerned to make the FRC something more than a place for the sick and the pregnant. They wanted a place where people might go even when they are not in immediate need--a place where they and their neighbors would be comfortable. They imagined it as the cornerstone of a community, a place for the healthy as well as the struggling. It remains to be seen the extent to which local residents requests and proposals will be treated as legitimate.

3. Building social capital in at-risk communities.

The community-building potential of the Family Resource Center leads to the third major issue: How can collaboratives help develop the social capital necessary for healthy communities? As described by Coleman and Hoffer (1987), social capital is an essential ingredient in strong families, neighborhoods and communities. Without attention to social capital, particular policies and programs generated by collaboratives seem to promise only limited success for at-risk youth.

The contribution of Coleman's theory of social capital is that it calls attention to the critical role of strong social relations between persons. These relations provide the basis for organizing collective effort. Without social organization individuals are adrift and without support. The decline of social capital is a partial explanation for the decline in the quality of family, neighborhood and community life.

Social capital is constructed out of shared norms and expectations as well as trust among people. Social capital is built through informal (non-contractual) interdependent

relations. For example, a parent who devotes time and energy to assist a child in her schooling is developing social capital as well as helping the child acquire human capital--academic skills and knowledge. A religious community provides social capital through its network of intergenerational relations. Members, both adults and children, communicate the shared norms and expectations of the community. Social capital provides the tools to organize for a common purpose. It is created whenever relationships establish reliable norms and expectations.

Because social capital exists in the relations between people the benefits accrue collectively. Coleman makes the following distinctions:

> Physical capital is ordinarily a private good and property rights make it possible for the person who invests in physical capital to capture the benefits it produces. There is, an economist might say, not a suboptimal investment in physical capital...For human capital also...the person who invests the time and resources in building up this capital reaps its benefits in the form of higher paying jobs. Social capital is not like this. The kinds of social structures that make it possible, social norms and the sanctions that enforce them do not benefit primarily the person or persons whose efforts would be necessary to bring them about. (Coleman, & Hoffer, 1987)

Coleman's conception suggests why a traditional institutional approach to social services based on contractually defined obligations is inadequate in fostering the development of social capital. Contractual relationships clearly define and limit the interaction of discrete individuals--service worker to client. To the extent that a provider feels a sense of responsibility to the client, this responsibility is attenuated by an employment contract along with carefully stipulated rules of eligibility. The relationship is not primarily motivated by a commitment to the client, rather it is a product of a commitment to one's employer to provide services to the client. Such a relationship is unlikely to foster the sense of trust

which Coleman sees as key to forming social capital. Further, the contractual basis of institution-client relations, perhaps unwittingly, reinforces norms that discourage the development of social capital, norms that see individuals as responsible for meeting their own needs (even if at the welfare office in isolation from social networks).

A distinction between autonomous individuals and social individuals is important to seeing the value of social capital development as an approach to addressing social problems. Describing autonomous individuals as emphasizing independence in action and responsibility, Fine (1993) argues that this results in little commitment or engagement in action for the collective good. By contrast, she describes a number of women who act as social individuals in one parent organization. They were "working in circles together...committed to broadening these circles, across communities and generations...'with and for' other parents who could not, or would not be as active as they" (Fine, 1993).

Much evidence is accumulating that intergenerational networks of the kind that both Coleman and Fine discuss are disappearing. They are disappearing in all segments of society but perhaps more rapidly in those neighborhoods most economically disadvantaged. Recognizing the decline of families and other organizations that formerly served as community cornerstones is essential to an honest treatment of issues. Of course, a danger in this analysis is creating stereotypes around "deficits" and a "culture of poverty" that obscure the healthy and surviving aspects of the community. When this occurs, it gives permission to policy-makers to engage in paternalism that serves neither the stated goals of policy makers themselves nor the interests of the community.

We acknowledge that social capital is difficult to build, yet we also argue that it is absolutely essential to the health of a community. Perhaps the best place for collaboratives to begin is with those institutions in neighborhoods that still foster social capital. (Stone & Wehlage, in press; Wehlage, 1993). For example, churches in many of these communities are critical messengers. In Savannah discussions with members of the neighborhood advisory council revealed the organizational influence of churches. Most who had become involved in the council did so through the encouragement of someone in their church. In fact, church affiliation was a primary way in which they identified themselves. One clergyman active in youth programs said that while church attendance on Sundays was down, "the churches are still the crux of what is going on in the black community." Another staff member for the collaborative noted the crucial historical role of churches in the community: "Churches can do things other agencies can't do...There is a sense of belonging there." It is this kind of history that as noted earlier accounts for the comfort zone parents feel at the church as opposed to the schools.

But there are also other sources of social capital. Neighborhood groups like "Guardians of the Culture," an African-American culture group in Savannah, work with religious leaders as well as local institutions of higher education to coordinate discussion groups on subjects ranging from African art and dance to philosophy. Their networks provided contacts with visiting African scholars as well as with local artists and national art organizations. Within families, seeds for the development of social capital also exist. In a neighborhood that is economically disadvantaged and where single parenting is the norm, extended families provide much of the intergenerational contact Coleman sites as critical.

Social capital is almost certainly lying dormant in some neighborhoods. For example, one case manager, a resident of the neighborhood designated for Savannah's FRC, proposed a project for youth to "re-inherit" the local community. By bringing retired craftsmen together with teens, an apprenticeship program could be formed to repair and rebuild housing in the inner-city neighborhood. Finding venture financial capital for programs like this one may be difficult in light of collaborative commitments to established human service agencies. Yet it is the strengthening of neighborhoods from the inside that is vital, something that traditional social services have not succeeded in doing. From neighborhood council members currently receiving welfare to black muslims who advocate separatism in the community, all spoke of the way in which welfare had "destroyed a sense of independence."

For collaboratives to undertake the building of social capital competes with one of the original goals of New Futures--delivering social services to clients more efficiently and effectively. Granted, delivering social services more efficiently and effectively are laudable goals (no one would argue for inefficiency and ineffectiveness), but by themselves they are an inadequate rationale for collaboration.

A major weakness of the current conception of social services is the focus on individuals rather than the social conditions and community context in which individuals live. Human services create categories of clients who receive particular services based on pre-defined needs. The relationship between client and agency is formalistic; if a client meets certain categorical definitions of need, then the agency can respond with a particular kind of service.

Given the goal of building social capital, a collaborative would be judged not by its success in delivering services more efficiently, but rather by the extent to which it helped people become interdependent members of the their community. Social capital development fosters networks of interdependency within and among families, neighborhoods and the larger community. In building social capital, successful collaboratives will reduce dependency on social service institutions. Resources will go to building networks of support that are integral to families and neighborhoods. The shift from delivering services to individual clients to investing in the social capital of whole groups of people appears to be essential if collaboratives are to ultimately improve the life chances of generations of at-risk children.

CONCLUSION

We have demonstrated some of the limits of a heavily institutional approach to collaboration. The example of New Futures, while successful in a number of ways, created largely top-down organizations whose policies tended to suffer from slippage and disjuncture. Not surprisingly, organizations dominated by high-level decision makers and professionals with credentials to certify their expertise tended to become paternalistic. This paternalism is objectionable on several grounds, not the least of which is a tendency to undermine the fundamental goals set by the collaborative for improving the life chances of youth.

We suggest the need to reconceptualize efforts at collaboration by turning to the community itself for additional expertise. Giving voice to the community and those who work in it implies a reconstruction of the process and long-term vision of collaboration. It suggests the need for a move beyond the boundaries of traditional social service institutions

to the development of social capital, the bedrock upon which programs and policies can be constructed.

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